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Patterns of pilgrimage

By Alastair Fowler

Donald R. Howard

The Idea of The Canterbury Tales
403pp. University of California
Press. £9.75.

Most of us have thought, in our simplicity, that *The Canterbury Tales* is an unfinished work, bristling with loose ends and ugly gaps. But Donald Howard has taken up a position simpler still, although also more complex. He has ventured to approach Chaucer's fragmentary masterpiece on the assumption that "the work as produced constitutes the definitive record of the writer's intention" and to hypothesize "that it is unfinished but complete". Unfinished, in the sense that there are perhaps some few passages unrevised and connections missing; complete, in the sense that the "idea" of the work is fully realized—and perhaps also recoverable—even if that is not quite the same thing that Professor Howard believes it to be. But (don't be eager to get beyond the tedious abstraction of considering the difficulties of historical understanding of medieval texts; away from objections that post-Medieval synchronic criticism ignores the hermeneutic circle. "There is no arguing with those who take this line."

Such postivism scarcely makes for interest in the obligatory methodological skimming that opens *The Idea of The Canterbury Tales*. Like many medieval scholars, Professor Howard is theoretically rather simple, a formalist after the older school of New Haven; although it should be said that his hot air balloon of scholarship is well ballasted with a basketful of historical scholarship, and an undoubted readiness to introduce biography where appropriate. This mixture seems in practice to give medieval criticism what it needs: the subject, when there are still too many works that have hardly been touched by a critic with an eye for irony and for the words on the folio, in the present case, the stance helps Professor Howard to avoid the pseudo-biographical evasion of the "workman view" that dismisses difficult passages as "leaves from a previous version". And perhaps only a simple eye could have had the hardihood to embark in 1970 on a quest for the idea

of *The Canterbury Tales*, no less.

Well, the boldness is pretty much justified by its results. But for a time this looks doubtful, while we are taken on a long approach through an elaborate discussion of such matters as Chaucer's obscure prayer in *Troilus* that he might "make in some comedy". These preliminaries partly tend towards the conclusion that Chaucer was a single "book about the world", which would be a comedy, in the medieval sense. (A too rigid application of the generic definition leads to some special pleading, as recalcitrant tales are pushed into rank.) Chaucer's didactic purpose is justified by a contrast between his secularism and Dante's elevated seriousness, and then by another that goes to show him as more moral than "moral Gower". More may not agree that Chaucer's way of teaching is necessarily better than Gower's (he may just be a better poet); but we feel that Professor Howard has caught Chaucer's tone well. He can even persuade us that Chaucer may have been conservative enough to view Dante with detached irony—if not, quite, that irony is the only high seriousness.

Here, and throughout, it is the particular insights that convince, rather than the broad generalizations. We are interested to learn about his works Chaucer called books, and what degree of unity this implied; less interested by the misty "Germanism" of "bookness", "voiceness", and even "paperiness"; although it is an important point (taken over from Burrow) that *The Canterbury Tales* displays both oral and bookish forms of organization. The most pertinent argument to emerge from the early chapters concerns the fact that Chaucer's book about the world is a book about the way through it, about pilgrimage. Partly on the basis of what Reinhold Billerbeck, partly from his own researches, Professor Howard is able to tell us that of 526 accounts of the Jerusalem pilgrimage none depicts a pilgrim. Pilgrimage, and a fortiori the pilgrimage of life, was conceived as a one-way journey. Tales to be told on the way back from Canterbury, therefore, need not trouble the reader or critic of Chaucer. In later chapters this argument is strengthened, when

Professor Howard develops the idea of the pilgrimage as an inner and symbolic passage of the soul.

It must have struck every reader that the frame narrative of *The Canterbury Tales* is not particularly devout. But many will not have reflected on the extent to which not just the cult of St. Thomas, but even the mundane appearances of any pilgrimage—the stopping places, the horse trails, etc.—are improbably absent. By observation, another of the modernisms, another of the controlling themes of the book, is meant "the experience of things not yet obsolete about which it is feasible to predict an end". Professor Howard sometimes presses this idea too far. The Wife and the Merchant may be said to be obsessed with their own past; but to regard their choices of genre for their tales as in character is to imply more about the obsolescence of "old romances" than could perhaps be easily substantiated.

The theme is traced through the General Prologue characters with varying success. All can perform a pilgrimage to social changes of Chaucer's time. And, with many, such as the Monk who "haild after the newe world", this relation is of primary interest. But with others it is not so important or so simple. To say that the Knight's crusading ideal is "jaundiced" by "any thoughtful man" of Chaucer's time may not quite, we feel, arrive at what Chaucer's character of the Knight has to tell us. It is a sort of simplification, too obviously designed to lead (as eventually it does) to a conclusion about *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole, namely that it "gives us a picture of a disordered Christian society in a state of obsolescence, decline, and uncertainty; we do not know where it is headed". Nevertheless, the idea remains a very useful one for focusing our responses to the work. There is much in the generalization that "ideals are false but instructive in the *Troilus*, true but tarnished in *The Canterbury Tales*". The particular sense of mutability that gives the feeling at length convinced, is that of the passing moment.

A further set of distinctions between the two works concerns irony. In the *Troilus*, as fits a tragedy, the irony is primarily dramatic irony, such as comes from

style, so to call it, with that of *Troilus*. The latter archaizes and distances the cyclic time of the old tale, the tragedy ever renewed. But the style of *The Canterbury Tales* is to modernize, and make it immediate. (This is reflected in the tenses used—each tale and its teller in the framing passages occupies a separate present.) The two works also differ in that the world of *Troilus* is unchanging, whereas that of *The Canterbury Tales* is obsolescent. By obsolescence, another of the controlling themes of the book, is meant "the experience of things not yet obsolete about which it is feasible to predict an end". Professor Howard sometimes presses this idea too far. The Wife and the Merchant may be said to be obsessed with their own past; but to regard their choices of genre for their tales as in character is to imply more about the obsolescence of "old romances" than could perhaps be easily substantiated.

The theme is traced through the General Prologue characters with varying success. All can perform a pilgrimage to social changes of Chaucer's time. And, with many, such as the Monk who "haild after the newe world", this relation is of primary interest. But with others it is not so important or so simple. To say that the Knight's crusading ideal is "jaundiced" by "any thoughtful man" of Chaucer's time may not quite, we feel, arrive at what Chaucer's character of the Knight has to tell us. It is a sort of simplification, too obviously designed to lead (as eventually it does) to a conclusion about *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole, namely that it "gives us a picture of a disordered Christian society in a state of obsolescence, decline, and uncertainty; we do not know where it is headed". Nevertheless, the idea remains a very useful one for focusing our responses to the work. There is much in the generalization that "ideals are false but instructive in the *Troilus*, true but tarnished in *The Canterbury Tales*". The particular sense of mutability that gives the feeling at length convinced, is that of the passing moment.

A further set of distinctions between the two works concerns irony. In the *Troilus*, as fits a tragedy, the irony is primarily dramatic irony, such as comes from

knowing the outcome of the story. But in *The Canterbury Tales* the ironies depend rather on knowledge of medieval society. Chaucer's irony is a very well worked subject; yet Professor Howard contrives to treat it particularly good on the narrative persona and the complications in it that result from his having to assume second-order pilgrim-tourer roles. From time to time we get "unpersonated artistry", a through, with possibilities of one more delicate irony. In "The Knight's Tale", Professor Howard hears rather more of Chaucer's voice than I can myself. (Its deflating ironies need not be Chaucer's mock-heroic in persona artistry; they are easily explicable as in character for the no-nonsense Knight.)

But elsewhere he treats the obligatory topic of the matching of tale and teller tranchantly. In *The Canterbury Tales*, unlike the *Troilus*, the characters have no style of their own. Adjustment is by moral decorum; or else by its ironically conspicuous absence, with the anticlerical Prioresse, dangerously undisciplined, but perhaps sound hypothesis. Professor Howard imagines the Narrator as a "wide-eyed, observant" and charitable Christian; a view that may be too charitable to be just to his moral blindness and worldliness. Here my chief reservation concerns the idea that Chaucer must drop the naive Narrator's mask to adopt those of the other pilgrims. May he not simply hold it in abeyance? Our novel-dominated criticism tends to make us too intransigent in our curiosity for significant details in narrative stance.

The supreme fiction of *The Canterbury Tales* is the tour de force whereby the whole pilgrimage frame is presented as the memory of one of the pilgrims. Professor Howard is at his best where he notices Chaucer's great originality in this use of memory as a means to reality. A simple but striking observation. To say memory is such a context, of course, is to say what requires explanation; which we are given in a brief account of the *ars memorativa* prevalent in the Middle Ages. One might say that Professor Howard takes as an established fact what is really a

rather controversial hypothesis. But perhaps we should judge by his results, and these are convincing enough. At a performance of *The Canterbury Tales*, everything depended on the audience's memory of the General Prologue: with each new tale, the teller's character, as described there, has to be recalled. Moreover, the pattern of the whole *Canterbury Tales* is epitomized in the General Prologue, with its apparently random disorganization and its underlying artful order. For its portraits are arranged in "places" like those of the artificial memory systems.

The most obvious array is the division into three "estates" and other smaller groupings (such as the religious: Monk and Friar). One of Professor Howard's boldest innovations is the theory that each of the four main estates, the Knight, Clerk, Parson and Prioress—heads a less obvious group of seven portraits: Knight: Squire, Yeoman, Prioress, Monk, Friar, Merchant, Clerk; Man of Law, Franklin, Guildsmen, Shipman, Physician, Wife; Parson, Ploverman; Miller, Manciple, Reeve, Summoner, Pardoner, Host.

We may feel at once inclined to fault this scheme. Where is the Cook? Is the third seer not an eight? And surely the Host is not a pilgrim like the others? But as with all our insights, such objections lead to development, not demolishment. The Cook is separately described as the Guildsmen are not; so that the middle term of the second seven is the Host, a vividly accompanied by a group. This matches quite closely the middle term of the first heptad, the Prioress accompanied by her nun and priests. Moreover, if we exclude the Host, we arrive at a third seven, led by the Parson alone.

Underlying this surface order of pilgrims is another, less evident, which Professor Howard does not discuss. Assuming that lines 163-4 are genuine, and listing the pilgrims who contribute tales, in the order of their General Prologue portraits, we have, in the following array: 1 Knight, 2 Squire, 3 Prioress, 4 Second Nun, 5 Nun's Priest, 6 Monk, 7 Friar, 8 Merchant, 9 Clerk, 10 Man of Law, 11 Franklin, 12 Cook, 13 Shipman, 14 Physician, 15 Wife, 16 Parson, 17 Miller, 18 Manciple, 19 Reeve, 20 Summoner, 21 Pardoner. (Lines 54-2 imply an alternative, subsidiary order for the pilgrims after the Parson.) Now the first seven really makes sense, being ordered with quite an elaborate symmetry: a chivalric knight (Knight and Squire) balances a pair of religious (Monk and Friar) about the Prioress's party. Moreover, the second seven makes sense, too, in an unexpected way. Its central pilgrim, No. 11, at the mid-point of the whole array, is the Franklin. But the Franklin is also the central teller in the Ellesmere order of tales actually told, coming twelfth of twenty-three tellers. And the same pilgrim is central by line-count from the beginning of the General Prologue to the end of the catalogue of pilgrims at line 714.

It begins to look as if the various "discrepancies" between the General Prologue catalogues and the order of the tales are not "leaves from a previous version" but Chaucer's interlarded designs in ornamental art is not easy to determine with precision. This is where Professor Howard makes what may prove his most valuable contribution. Taking a hint, perhaps, from some recent work of Harry Bobrow on manuscript illumination, he suggests attention on the knots and knot types of interlarded designs. He sees that the analogy with visual interlaced is unfortunate in so far as it leads us to expect continuous narrative "strands" in *The Canterbury Tales*.

We get instead abrupt transitions, unmotivated entrances and exits, interruptions. . . . If we are to see the structure of a narrative interlaced we have to focus our attention on those places where the General Prologue as a highly ordered structure, its overt conventional design, based on the dream vision, might indeed have led us to expect that.

The most original part of the book is an extension of this structural inquiry into the inner ordering of the tales themselves. As mere "Canterbury tales", they are presented as likely to be false. And in the event each is undercut or discredited by ironic intrusions or by overblown tales; as when "The Miller's Tale" parodies the Knight's. Again, patterns can be half glimpsed in their form.

For example, all the tales in stanzas, except the Physician's, "sound like valid morality"; although most of them falsify or are falsified by their tellers. To offset these cancelling strategies come the finalities of the tales' closures, which Professor Howard surveys with admirable shrewdness. He finds that most of the narrators end with a moral, prayer, or blessing that reflects their character and so returns us to the "storial" world of the pilgrimage, from which "the next tale" will be drawn. Six tales, however, such as the Franklin's, its concluding *demande d'amour*, do not leave us in the fictional world but "direct us outside the pilgrimage into other realms of discourse". These six all come at key points, at the end of groups of tales or against a manuscript.

To reduce the aesthetics of Chaucer's form, Professor Howard proposes three "models" of his structural idea. The first model, the flower-wheel window, seems to me something of an irrelevance (though very interesting) because it points, apart from the symbolism of the pilgrimage as a whole, is the idea of the General Prologue as a "central schema to which diverse parts are related in retrospect". The second model, produced with many flashbacks, is the labyrinth, particularly the cathedral labyrinth used in ritual enactments of pilgrimage. This fashionable model has even less to offer (except perhaps as a visual aid in teaching); only the notion of a "manuscript" contrasted with an analogy between the work's intricacies and the ramifications of error. It is the third model, interlace, that leads to a break-through.

In his contributions to *Loonnie's Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages* (1959) and subsequently in *The Idea of The Canterbury Tales*, Eugene Vinaver developed an older theory, of Ferdinand Lot's, that medieval romances used on a vast scale the narrative device of interweaving many themes "distinct and yet inseparable" in such way that each tale leads to something else, by intricate paths, rather than in the manner of the ribbon designs of illuminated manuscripts. Since then, the idea of interlace has proved to be one of the most influential in literary criticism. It has been applied to Chaucer's romances to other genres and periods (John Leyerle and others apply it for example to *Beowulf*). It is related here to other medieval thought forms (rhetorical division, typological exegesis, binary opposition, the *ars memorativa*, etc.). And it is developed theoretically into an alternative poetic, for literature that classical and Coleridgean poetics are unable to treat with justice: a poetic of architectural as against organic form, designed to exclude analogies and to wonder whether the oppositions need be quite so stark: is Dickens, for instance, really as much on the other side as Professor Howard thinks? The poetic of interlace, which Howard has encouraged a more disinterested Howard's survey again and again demonstrates the possibilities opened up by his bold application of the poetic of interlace to an author who does not immediately spring to mind as a writer of romances in the ordinary sense. ("The Knight's Tale" for example, has little internal interlacing.) There is a freedom and breadth of treatment that one welcomes. At the same time, the aesthetic of interlace can have its own blunders. Since last four centuries, the poetic of interlace has been a centre, its poetic designs and may tempt a critic to neglect orderly structures of other sorts. Perhaps an even more architectural and iconographical model phenomena, without being any less medieval. Professor Howard's own analogy with a storied initial from the Tichhill Psalter provides an example of what I mean. Although the illumination uses several interlaced motifs, the reason between its four rounds is purely iconographic.

Similarly with the common type of binary or dyptichous motif, such as one finds lower down on the Psalter folio, and in Chaucer's paired tales: I am not sure how much it helps to call the poetical form interlaced, more than other structural principles at work more regularly, accretive, more firmly schematic. "The Monk's Tale", for instance, is a gathering of seventeen tragedies or exemplars. As Professor Howard notes, there are twelve exemplars in which the catastrophe has moral implications, and five "pure de casibus tragedies" where the protagonist's downfall comes without fault, together forming the

thought of as gaps where the work is unfinished. But Professor Howard argues that they are intentional in *medieval res beginnings*; thus reducing drastically the number of problems of serial order. "The Man of Law's Tale", which begins with a Type 3 juncture, introduces a new genre, which orders them in groups ("Tales of Civil Conduct" etc.); traces their themes or "metastories"; and describes their narrative stances, didactic aims, and interrelationships.

Fragment I, for example, exhibits a "degenerative movement" together with concatenation, and is "The Miller's Tale" parodies the Knight's and the Reeve's "quits" the Miller's; Fragment VII comprises three morally contrasted pairs; and so forth. Inevitably, the accounts of individual tales, taken together, form a summary, others too derivative. Those of "The Miller's Tale" and "The Reeve's Tale" lack penetration. "The Friar's Tale" and "The Summoner's Tale" are related to the Marriage Group unconsciously; perhaps because the ideal of thematic unity, hard to escape, creeps back in at this point. "The Squire's Tale", a little surprisingly, emerges as an expression of Chaucer's bourgeois sentiment (the young aristocrat, nothing to offend the pilgrims). And the idea of a higher form of marriage betrays the vanity of the thinking of the whole Marriage Group. A chapter on "The Pardoner's Tale" and "The Parson's Tale" (the last pilgrim and last tale) is concerned with extending beyond romance to other genres and periods (John Leyerle and others apply it for example to *Beowulf*). It is related here to other medieval thought forms (rhetorical division, typological exegesis, binary opposition, the *ars memorativa*, etc.). And it is developed theoretically into an alternative poetic, for literature that classical and Coleridgean poetics are unable to treat with justice: a poetic of architectural as against organic form, designed to exclude analogies and to wonder whether the oppositions need be quite so stark: is Dickens, for instance, really as much on the other side as Professor Howard thinks? The poetic of interlace, which Howard has encouraged a more disinterested Howard's survey again and again demonstrates the possibilities opened up by his bold application of the poetic of interlace to an author who does not immediately spring to mind as a writer of romances in the ordinary sense. ("The Knight's Tale" for example, has little internal interlacing.) There is a freedom and breadth of treatment that one welcomes. At the same time, the aesthetic of interlace can have its own blunders. Since last four centuries, the poetic of interlace has been a centre, its poetic designs and may tempt a critic to neglect orderly structures of other sorts. Perhaps an even more architectural and iconographical model phenomena, without being any less medieval. Professor Howard's own analogy with a storied initial from the Tichhill Psalter provides an example of what I mean. Although the illumination uses several interlaced motifs, the reason between its four rounds is purely iconographic.

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Colin M Kraay is Keeper of the Heberden Coin Room in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. He lectures in Greek numismatics in the University of Oxford and is a Fellow of Wolfson College.

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Square-bashing

By Simon Jenkins

NICK WATES:
The Battle for Tolmers Square
232pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
Paperback, £2.95.

Cynics might well call this a post-mortem book. If it is read in years to come, it will take us back to the early 1970s, to days when it was hurray for tenants and squatters and community action and compulsory purchase and how to speculate and office blocks and private property. They were days when students could comb the more fashionable postal districts for good causes, release the dazed inhabitants from the curse of the black-coated capitalist and guide them towards a glorious future in the public sector.

Just as I'm sure Nick Wates would argue the impossibility of writing a non-political book about Tolmers Square, so it is hard to write a non-political review of his book. But neither book nor (I hope) review need be any the worse for that. For though I found Wates's tunnel vision bristling and his major premise naive, he has produced a rare report from the frontier of urban change—no one should be thankful to him for that.

Tolmers Square is typical of hundreds of city communities left to their fate by the outward flight of residential London and about to be overrun by the curse of the black-coated capitalist. In American terms, it encompasses little more than two city blocks within which was a changing population of old people, immigrants, small businesses and traders. Despite a decaying fabric, the Tolmers Square area still had the sort of vitality any city neighbourhood can muster if left to its own devices.

In the event it was not, and for an incredible seventeen years Tolmers Square suffered death by slow strangulation. What the London County Council built was a massive and unexpressed looting of the street. Then in the mid-1960s a property tycoon, Joe Levy of Stock Corporation, built one of the biggest office developments in London—the "Buston Centre"—reshadowing it. He then started buying up leases round Tolmers Square itself with the active encouragement of the planning authorities.

In view of what happened elsewhere in London (and indeed all over Britain) it is remarkable that this tiny community bothered to fight back. Businesses had to move out, buildings crumbled, repairs were left undone, the Tolmers Cinema was demolished, one house actually fell down of its

own accord (the occupants narrowly escaping death). From personal experience, I can only say the anguish described here is both convincing and appalling. Whatever economic laws governing urban regeneration might be mustered by Joe Levy and his (Labour) friends at County Hall, Tolmers Square is the worst possible advertisement for them. It was a disgrace. Eventually, a combination of local action, stimulated largely by squatters who moved in after many of the residents left, and a degree of interest prevailed upon the authorities to stop Levy and search for alternative solutions. The success story, however, is clouded by the fact that Camden, the new controlling interest in the area, appear to have no more ideas than Levy as to what to do, and have shown themselves not much more sensible as landlords while they dither.

Mr Wates, himself one of the squatters, sadly fails to see the inherent contradiction in his loathing of the property men and apparent affection for the doings of Camden Labour Party. (He should realize that council ownership is the Marxist antithesis, not synthesis.) Evidence suggests that it is the impact of comprehensive development as such that kills the intricate life of cities—be it public or private in sponsorship. Identical communities in Tolmers Square have been swatted from the urban map far more effectively by the so-called representatives of the community in Liverpool or Southwark or Birmingham. Indeed I would venture to suggest that Tolmers Square only survived to its present extent through its extreme good fortune in being in an increasingly middle-class borough, Camden, and within walking distance of University College (junior common room and Levy's Buston Centre).

Tolmers Square, as the excellent historical section of this book points out, was wholly a creation of the free market in property, its

buildings and inhabitants owing their diversity to successive waves of speculation and enterprise. The multitude of activities Mr Wates so endearingly wants protected would not be there but for these qualities. (They are not noticeable by their presence on council estates.) The villain today is not speculation or private profit as such, but the on which they are not just permitted, but compelled to operate. It is the scale that blights and kills.

The council which refuses a planning permission to a local firm to expand (as near Tolmers Square), or discourages landlords from improving their property, is just as damaging as the office speculator. What was needed here was simply an awareness on the part of the council that piecemeal renewal was not anathema but essential. The controls were there to keep the community alive; instead they were used to help developer kill it. This is not merely a small-scale beautiful fantasy. As is haltingly happening in Covent Garden, controls could have deterred or restrained the property men without the alternate curse of compulsory purchase. As it is, poor Mr Wates seems almost upset at finding Camden spilling the end of his tale by proposing their own office scheme almost as big as Levy's. "Monstrous and hypocritical," he cries, "but what on earth did he expect from men to whom bigness is everything?"

None the less, I found this a much better book than I expected. It is not all student ranting. The interspersing of copious pictures, quotes and contemporary cuttings in small type with the main text is an effective antidote to the ideological monotony, and it adds immensely to the book's impact. I now feel I know a small slice of London really well and can sympathize with its characters as they go through a nightmare which has afflicted all generations of Londoners the poor since time immemorial.

Heads and Tails

He on the head and she on the coin's tail
Spin the coin upright on the table
They are running towards each other;
Flip the coin to decide a question: one or the other.
We spend the consorts in every shop,
They leave us they return to us.
In several colours, in many sizes,
In every transaction. A person
Murders for their images; a person
Builds hospitals and pays doctors with them;
Where do they live, shall I ever meet them?
I sign them, or my father leaves them to me.

Peter Redgrove

Preservationists' progress

By Kerry Downes

JANE FAWCETT (Editor):
The Future of the Past
Attitudes to Conservation 1174-1974
160pp with 125 illustrations. Thames
and Hudson. £7.50.

Four knights and four commoners have produced these essays historical and moral. As a book, the content is as variegated and its history nearly as wayward as that past whose future is one of our burdens. While the title goes back to Osbert Lancaster's essay of 1953, the more recent occasion for its use was the Victorian Society's exhibition of 1971, and not unreasonably much of the writing is, directly or obliquely, about the Victorians. The subtitle rests on the requirement that the new Canterbury Cathedral after the fire of 1174 should incorporate Conrad's Old Choir; from that date, Nikolaus Pevsner's survey of the awakening conservationist conscience takes only ten paragraphs to reach the foundation of the SPAB in 1877. His paper ostensibly traces the history of conservationist legislation, but not all his milestones can be so categorized, and although the medievalism of Wren and Vanbrugh appears later in the book the period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century could have been better served. It would perhaps have been worth repeating the famous remark of Hawksmoor whose attitude to the past was interesting precisely because it was ambiguous—that "what ever is good in its kind ought to be preserved" in respect to antiquity, as well as our present advantage, for destruction can be profitable to none but such as live by it.

Nikolaus Pevsner traces Gothic restoration from "scraps" (Wyatt and earlier) to "Anti-scraps" (William Morris), and the editor reviews the specific and rather

sorry tale of well-meaning vandals done to our cathedrals in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mick Gorton's paper on the alterations to country houses shows that there the record was rather better: this is less surprising than it seems, because houses are every age for living in, and what is a more civilizing motive than religious conviction, in which restoration and owners in the past were not always less enlightened than those of today. If our knowledge is superior, our responsibility is proportionately greater.

No compendium on this subject would be complete without J. B. Kennerly. "A Preservationist's Progress," autobiographical, nostalgic, hopeful and infinitely more, it is tempting to generalize that our more optimistic and less history-ridden forebears at least placed what they destroyed by a historicist if unhistorical work of art in the place of the lost. Hugh Casson, the architect, argues that rather like Belloc's nurse, he found much preservation also in the conscience of a society less deep in rubble. Prebisterious moments are neutral, hard to explain, and mostly belonging to the past. But what do we do with Georgian churches, or with what cannot afford to be destroyed mansions, or with palaces standing in the way of open space?

From one class of monuments Britain is comparatively free: it is the only kind in America which Robin Winks discusses, though as the only kind to be found there the associative bond is weak. Examples are the log cabin in which Lincoln was born, the site of the first pharmacy in one state, the log gymnasium where Churchill gave "Iron Curtain" to the British House of Commons. Preserving these as vital as a bottle of formalin, at the same time may be said (and is said by Osbert Lancaster) of the houses that have passed from family to state, of reconstructions like the Nuremberg, and of medievalism such as that which in the 1930s in post-Antique Rome was in "What Shall We Preserve?" he reminds us that "one can build the New Jerusalem in a spiritual dust-bowl" and that "scraps as a starting-point is forever unsatisfactory." What society needs most is not more laws, more committees, or even more money, but more vision, forbearance, understanding, and above all imagination.

A who's who of whodunits

By T. J. Binyon

CHRIS STEINBRUNNER and
OTTO PENZLER (Editors):
Encyclopedia of Mystery and
Detection
436pp. Routledge. £12.50.

"Just give me down my index of biographies from the shelf." He turned over the pages lazily, leaning back in his chair and blowing great clouds of smoke from his cigar.

"My collection of M's is a fine one," said he. "Mystery is enough to make any man's hair stand on end. Here is Morgan the poisoner, and Merri-dew of abominable memory, and Mathews, who knocked out my left canine in the waiting-room at Charing Cross, and finally, here is our friend of tonight."

Sherlock Holmes' "friend of tonight" is, of course, Colonel Sebastian Moran, formerly of the 1st Bangalore Pioneers, who has just ruined a wax bust of Holmes with a revolver bullet shot from an air-gun.

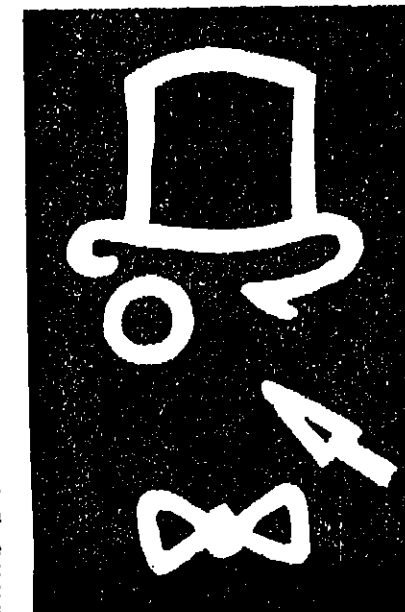
Moran does not appear in this new index of biographies, but its collection of M's can still rival Holmes', since it includes Dr Mabuse, Travis McGee, Malger, Antony Muliland, Colonel March, Philip Marlowe, Jane Marple, Inspector Martineau, Perry Mason, Sir Henry Merrivale, Morristy (with two portraits), and Mr Moto. As this list might suggest, the *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* devotes as much attention to fiction characters as to their creators. If not more, Sherlock Holmes has an entry of eight and a half pages (the longest in the book, as is surely right), while Conan Doyle has scarcely two pages. Sometimes the character takes over completely: Peter O'Donnell, the first pharmacy in one state, the log gymnasium where Churchill gave "Iron Curtain" to the British House of Commons. Preserving these as vital as a bottle of formalin, at the same time may be said (and is said by Osbert Lancaster) of the houses that have passed from family to state, of reconstructions like the Nuremberg, and of medievalism such as that which in the 1930s in post-Antique Rome was in "What Shall We Preserve?" he reminds us that "one can build the New Jerusalem in a spiritual dust-bowl" and that "scraps as a starting-point is forever unsatisfactory." What society needs most is not more laws, more committees, or even more money, but more vision, forbearance, understanding, and above all imagination.

This is not a reference work to which one might turn in search of a new author to enjoy. A *Catalogue of Crime*, by Jacques Barzun and Wendell Herrig Taylor, with its acerbic summings-up, is far more useful in this respect. What the

Encyclopedia provides is an immense amount of almost useless and hence absolutely fascinating information. Eric Stanley Gardner's output kept six full-time secretaries at work; Gore Vidal wrote three detective novels under the pseudonym Edgar Box. Lawyer Ephraim Tutt, equal parts Abraham Lincoln, Fick, Uncle Sam and Robin Hood, is obviously a character to avoid; private eye Race Williams, an exceptional shot, who "once fired two revolvers at the same time—making only one hole between the eyes of his victim—equally obviously, one to look out for. The statement that Max Carrados is "the first and best blind detective in literature" causes a slight raising of the eyebrow, but proves justified when further research turns up not one William MacIntyre's Basil Saintone, "a nationally famous blind lawyer," but also Captain Duncan Maclellan, hero of novels by Bernard H. Kendrick. "Tall, dark, strikingly handsome, and immaculately dressed and groomed," Captain Maclellan moves with astonishing ease and self-assurance in spite of his total blindness.

The *Encyclopedia* is strongest on those aspects of the genre which have hitherto been ignored by most of its historians: the heroes of popular fiction, of the dime novel and pulp magazine—like Charlie Chan, Nick Carter, Boston Blackie (who does not come from Boston), and Sexton Blake. It is excellent on comic-strip heroes such as Dick Tracy or Rip Kirby. There are two lengthy and informative articles on radio and television detectives, and Robert E. Briney has contributed an authoritative piece on the *Sinister Oriental*.

Coverage of films, especially those of the 1920s and 1930s, is extremely full and the book is illustrated by a large number of stills. The best comes from a demented cartoonist of Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, made by Universal in 1932: behind a benchful of chemical apparatus Arlene Francis, trussed to an architecturally implausible beam, confronts Bela Lugosi, in a tantrum because he is unable to mate her experimentally with his pet gorilla. While on this subject



"The Toff" and Dick Tracey from the *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*, reviewed on this page. Between these two heroes is the Edgar Allan Poe Award ("The Edgar"), awarded annually by the Mystery Writers of America.

it should be noted that the caption on page 313 which begins: "Deranged surgeon Bela Lugosi (left) should read: 'Deranged surgeon Bela Lugosi (right).'"

Unlike Barzun and Taylor in their catalogue raisonné the authors of the *Encyclopedia* have formed no clear criteria by which to judge the relative worth of the works they describe. They criticize very rarely but deal out praise with a lavish and indiscriminating hand. Faith in their critical acumen takes a hard knock in the O's, when Agatha Christie's irritating couple, Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, are described as entertaining, and it is demolished completely in the S's by an attempt to justify Mickey Spillane's heroes: "When they break a villain's arm, or shoot him in the stomach, he has invariably deserved the treatment, and no whitening self-remorse follows the retribution."

The style in which the entries are written is, at its best, bland and banal, though occasionally unintentionally comic. Le Quex and other high-ranking people; Cyril Hare "received a coveted first" at Oxford; at its worst it is intolerably prolix and diffuse, where, like Bradshaw, it should be terse and to the point. One suspects that the authors themselves have been invited to contribute to their own entries, and



the editorial knife has been un-pardonably careful. How else to explain such gems of non-information as the fact that the wife of one English writer is a native of the Isle of Man, and that the wife of another "holds a degree in psychology and is currently studying Chinese at the School of Oriental and African Studies"?

Sensible pruning would have enabled more writers to be included: although the selection is on the whole good, the following should figure in a second edition: Frank Arthur (*The Suez Harbour Mystery*), Chester Rimes (with Colilla Ed Johnson and Grave Digger Jones), P. M. Hubbard, Richard Koverne, Cameron McCabe (author of *The Face on the Cutting-Room Floor*—the detective story to end detective stories), and J. C. Masterman. And a number of obvious errors should be corrected: Wimsey

reached the rank of major, not captain; C. P. Snow's *Death under Seal* takes place on the Norfolk Broads, not off the English coast; the victim in Ngalo Marsh's *Swing Brother Swing* is a piano-accordionist, not a pianist. The entry on Bullidos Drummond is full of mistakes. His servant is Denny, not Tenny; his "aristocratic friend" Algy, not Algla, Longworth (and why this emphasis on Algy's connections? Drummond himself is a cousin of Lord Swasey). There is no mention of Toby Sholair, Peter Durrell or Ted Jerningham, nor, most reprehensibly, of the immortal Irma.

All in all, however, the *Encyclopedia* is an indispensable bedside book for the addict, who can lull himself to sleep by reading the synopsis of the forty-seven films made of the adventures of Charlie Chan.

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TLS Commentary

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etching on a smudged plate
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more direct significance is the fact that all but the first of the six volumes of the *Studies* were published abroad. Dr Goldberger's book therefore is to be welcomed, although one cannot fail to deplore the pushing and needlessly person-
al nature of a great deal of it. There

[illegible]

Don Quixote, Mr. D., but some essential ingredient is missing. The author, Roy Dotrice, is a very competent and experienced illustrator, Charles is moved by his brother's sympathy to murmur "My dear young Sancho Panza," and dispatches friendly to his clerk, "Sam." Sam is the only character who is not there. And Sam Weller is born. It is not just the banality that is offensive, but the assumption that creativity means fastening on some formula that has been established and cannot be discovered ("That's it!"). This is not professional or realistic, it is vague, sentimental and evasive, as in the end is Roy Dotrice's loving impersonation of the Shakespearean actor, London was obviously produced and written in the faith that Dickens, were he alive now, would be the sort of man who would write for television. The price for another, is that he is not.

We come to the question of Mr. Ells's achievement as a writer. At the outset it may be necessary to insist that the *Studies in Man and Psychology* is not a work of fiction, but a study for consideration. They are valuable and immensely painstaking contributions to our knowledge of the sex impulse and of sexual phenomena in general. They are also works of literature, and of literary, literary and artistic and philosophical essays, criticism of a kind which is interesting and we would write literature, but it is probably of temporary value only. As the permanent addition to knowledge. They are hardly to be regarded as general literature, but they fit in the scheme of Mr. Ells's philosophy. The general conception of life and the general conception of man and the general conception of the

the whole art of living as the cornerstone of the building—which comes out as clearly in the first volume, *Sexual Inversion*, as in the last, *Sex in Relation to Society*. The studies foreshadow a large part of modern psychoanalysis, but the original and important details of investigation, Freud and other psychoanalysts have frequently referred to their indebtedness to the author of them. The terms auto-eroticism and Narcissism were first used by him, and the concept derived from him—the doubt characteristic of the overlapping of modern scientific and psychological research. But perhaps the most valuable aspect of the earlier volumes is their anticipation of the concept of the unconscious, now called sublimation. (The first of the books, it should be remembered, appeared thirty years ago.) At a recent, Mr. Ellis's pioneering efforts shocked the susceptibilities of many of his contemporaries, as questioned his sanity in England.

Oxford University Press

